

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-49-00

August 9, 2000

The following is offered in response to your letter in which you request a formal interpretation of Sections 314 and 315 of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code portion of the 1999 State Building Code.

Question: Do stairs within a pre-cast concrete (Bilco-type) basement hatchway of a One and Two Family Dwelling constructed to the requirements of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code have to comply with stair and handrail requirements?

Answer: No, as long as a code-compliant means of egress is provided from the basement. It is not the intention of the code that such a hatchway be utilized or regulated as a means of egress. Such hatchways are intended to provide convenience access to basements rather than to serve as the primary or only means of entry and egress to a basement. As a convenience access, rather than a means of egress, the stairs within the hatchway are not required to meet the provisions of Sections 314 and 315 of the referenced code, however, as a matter of practicality and safety, the geometry of the rise and run must be such that the stairs are functionally usable.

In the event that a code-compliant means of egress is not provided to the occupiable basement, it would not be appropriate to install such a hatchway as the only entry and egress to a basement. In that case, one would have to provide a code-compliant, weather protected stairway or a door to grade to serve as the required means of egress.